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DE QUESNOY'S LAST BANQUET.

'MONSIEUR is sketching the old chateau? It is well worth the trouble, *ma foi!* but, for my part, I like not to look at it.'

I started, and looked round. I had seated myself on a huge moss-grown boulder, upon a gentle slope overlooking the broad smooth stream of the Doubs. To my left extended a wide stretch of cultivated land, parcelled off into those little patches which are one of the first things that strike one on entering France. To my right, against a background of encircling woodland, stood out the low thatched houses, and broad, white, dusty street of the little village of St Pierre, half-way up which the painted signboard of the *Pomme d'Or* glittered like a shield in the sunshine. Just below me, the river curved itself in one great sweep round the base of a steep hill, that rose on the opposite side, on the brow of which stood the ruins of an old seignorial chateau. Such relics are not uncommon in France; but this ruin differed from those which I had yet seen, as the corpse of a man cruelly murdered differs from that of one who has died in his sleep. The ground riven as if by an earthquake—the black charred stones scattered far and wide around—the yawning rifts in the masonry, which still remained erect—all spoke, not of gradual decay, but of sudden and terrible destruction. The gloom of a great crime and a fearful tragedy seemed to brood over that gaunt, ghastly ruin, looming grimly against the glory of the clear summer sky, like the shadow of one great sin upon a stainless life.

I turned round (as I have said) to see who had spoken, and saw beside me an old man in the dress of a well-to-do peasant of the country. I had just been reading Erckmann-Chatrian's glorious *Histoire d'un Paysan*; and had we been in the neighbourhood of Phalsbourg, instead of in that of Besançon, I should have said that Michel Bastien now stood before me. The long white hair and beard, enclosing the bronzed face in a kind of frame—the large bright eye—the bold erect bearing—above all, the deep earnest look, as of one who had done and suffered above the

measure of his kind—were all suggestive of the Alsatian *Old Mortality*. I saw at once that I had fallen in with a 'character.'

'You say you don't like to look at that ruin yonder?' said I. 'Well, it certainly is not a pleasant sight; but what do you know about it?'

'*Everything*,' answered the old peasant emphatically. 'I saw it in all its splendour, and I saw it in the hour of its destruction, seventy years ago. If you care to hear the story, I'll tell it you.'

The offer was not to be slighted; for such a tale as this promised to be, related by an eye-witness on the very scene of the catastrophe, was an unexpected prize. I motioned my companion to a seat on the stone beside me, and disposed myself to listen to him.

'I remember the days before the Revolution,' he began, 'although I was then only a child; but I remember them just as one might recollect a horrid nightmare. I seem to have dreamed of being hungry, and cold, and ragged, and helpless, for ever so long—and then suddenly to have waked up free and well off. After all, it wasn't *our* fault if the guillotines and noyades befell; *they* were the work of the Terrorists of the Assemblée, and the *canaille* of the great towns. All that we peasants wanted was to have enough to live upon, instead of being flayed alive by the nobles; and the Revolution did *that* for us, at least. Look at me! In my childhood, I ran barefoot along the high-road, begging of the passers-by, with no hope of ever being any better off than my father, a poor labourer, who lived upon black bread and onions, and never knew what it was to be warm or well clothed from one year's end to another. I remember that in those days I used always to think of heaven as a place where one would be allowed to sit close to a big fire, and eat one's fill of the white bread and dainty roast-meat which my cousin, Pierre, the soldier (who was on guard at the Chateau de Quesnoy when his colonel dined there), had told me about. Well, Monsieur, I have now sheep and cattle of my own, and a good bit of corn-land into the bargain; my son Gaspard is an *avocat* at Lyon; and my grandson, Baptiste, is a

sous-lieutenant in the 8-me légère. Shew me the peasant before the Revolution whose son or grandson could have become an officer! Bah!

"Those were the days when the nobles did what they liked; and a pretty life they led us, *ma foi*! *Noie*, thank God, the *grands seigneurs* can't cut your throat or carry off your wife without any one daring to say a word; but before '89 it was another matter. *Tonnerre*! it was no joke then to fall in the way of a party of young chevaliers, hot with wine and mischief, and ready for any devil's prank that came into their heads. Every man that came in their road was sure to be beaten or run through, and as for the women— But the less said about that the better. I can remember even now (though I was quite a child when it happened) the night that our young lord, Henri de Quesnoy, and three or four of his wild companions, scoured the streets of Besançon with their riding-whips, and made every one they met go down on their knees in the mud and cry "Vive le roi!" Then, as if that was not enough for them, they broke ever so many windows, rang the great alarm-bell till they roused up the whole town, and finished by hanging a dead dog at the door of M. le Maire, with a bit of paper in its mouth, on which was written: "A' ton tour, mon frère!" [It's your turn, brother.] "Little did they dream, then, that the day was to come when they should themselves be hung like dogs to every lamp-iron, and when their blood should run in the streets of their own towns, to the cry, not of "Vive le roi!" but of "Vive la nation!" But all this doesn't belong to my story.

"Our old seigneur, Maurice de Quesnoy, who lived at the château yonder in the year '89, was such a man as I've heard M. le Curé read about in the Gospels—one "who feared not God, nor regarded man." Nothing could frighten him, nothing could melt him; he was just a man of marble—polished, and hard, and cold as death. In one of the great battles of the Seven Years' War, he had flung his plumed hat into an English battery, and leaped after it, without a man at his back; and when he came back alive, his soldiers muttered to each other that his hour was not come yet—for, you see, there was a legend abroad that he had sold himself to Satan for a certain term, and that nothing could harm him till his term was out. Our folks used to say that when he got tired of all his grand dishes, he fed upon children's flesh; and many a time have I screamed and run away for fear of being devoured, when I saw him come prancing along the road on his great black horse, all lace, and jewels, and embroidery, with his long feathers streaming in the wind, and his smooth, handsome, cruel face bent forward like the head of a bird of prey. But all this was just what pleased him—he liked to be feared by the *canaille*, as he used to call us; and, faith! we had good reason to fear him too! If the château were still standing, I could shew you the very tower on the top of which he hanged Jean Perret, for snaring game in the woods to feed his children, who were starving. Then there was poor Simon Alleazard, whose wife he had carried off. *He* lay in wait for the marquis one night, and fired at him; but the bullet only went through his hat, and didn't even touch him. The marquis had no weapon but his light rapier, and he wouldn't even condescend to draw that, but he wrenched Simon's own gun from him, and beat out his brains with the butt-end.

In short, he did such things that we used to cross ourselves at the very sound of his name, just as the Bretons do at that of Gilles de Retz, the wicked Count Bluebeard, who murdered all his wives one after another.* It would take me till midnight if I were to tell you all the horrible stories I heard about him as we sat crouched round our little spark of fire at night, squeezing close to each other to try and get warm—till at last I hardly dared stir out of the house for fear of meeting him.

"It was in the spring of '89—the year of the great *culbute*—that judgment first began to overtake M. le Marquis. He had been away at the court for two years, and we knew nothing of him except that his steward kept squeezing more and more money out of us every month, to pay for his master's fine doings at Versailles—when all of a sudden, word got about that he was coming; and, sure enough, a few days later he came, and with him a whole crowd of grand folks that fairly filled the château. And then, for several weeks together, there was nothing but feasting and drinking, and dancing and card-playing, and making love, all day long. Now it happened that among the ladies was one who had been a beauty at the court—Mademoiselle Claire de Montalbert, they called her—who had shewn much favour to our young lord, Monsieur Henri, when they were at Versailles together; but when she came down here, she seemed to have grown tired of him, and began to smile upon his great friend, M. Albert de St Florent; till at last, as young blood is always hot (especially when there's a lady in the case), she bred a deadly quarrel between them. One evening in May, my cousin Pierre, the soldier, who was up at the château attending upon his colonel, came down to us and told a terrible story. That very morning, the two young gentlemen, with other two to second them, had come out of the château before any one else was stirring, and away to a little open place at the corner of the wood, and there they fell to. M. Henri was a good blade, but this time he was too hot to be prudent, and at the fifth pass, he was run clean through the body. But he came of a race that always died hard; and the moment he felt the steel pierce him, he threw himself forward upon the sword, and, shortening his own, ran it into M. Albert's side so fiercely, that the blade snapped right across. Then he fell down and died where he stood. But M. Albert had little to boast of, for his wound was mortal, and two days later, he died also. And so the lives of two brave men were thrown away for the caprice of a woman—one of those great ladies without heart and without conscience, whom God created to avenge the sins of the noblesse upon themselves.

"When the news of all this got abroad, our people (God forgive them!) began to rejoice, and to say that now the aristocrats were beginning to devour each other, and that he who had robbed so many of their children knew now what it was to lose a child himself. But, as we afterwards learned, the old marquis, however he might grieve, was not one to let his grief be known. When he heard the news, he never sighed or trembled, but only asked

* The legend of Bluebeard does not exaggerate the atrocities of this incarnate fiend, who, after committing a thousand real crimes with impunity, was at length burned alive, on an absurd charge of sorcery.

how it fared with M. de St Florent ; and when they told him that the wound was mortal, he smiled his own cruel smile, and muttered to himself : " Good ! The De Quesnoys always strike home ! " And after that, he never mentioned his son's name again.

" Well, Monsieur, a few months later came the news of the fall of the Bastille ; and the peasants began to lift up their heads, and talk of doing something ; but no one dared to speak openly, for there were troops quartered in Besançon, and nobody knew yet whether they would join us or not. (I heard afterwards that they were ready enough to side with us, but, having no leaders, and each man doubting whether his comrades would stand by him, they did not stir.) But by the opening of the year '90, the soldiers in all the garrison towns had communicated with each other, and were all on the side of the people ; so, one day in March, the two Besançon regiments rose as one man, deposed their officers, shot their colonel, and elected Sergeant Roussel in his stead (the same Roussel who afterwards commanded a brigade under the great Emperor). Then our peasants began to think that it was time to square accounts with M. le Marquis, especially as all his grand friends had gone away, and there were only a few lackeys left to defend him. But somebody must have told him of what was going on ; for just as the peasants were all gathered in the village yonder, with hatchets and pitchforks, and what not, ready to go up to the château, there came a rattle of hoofs along the road, and into the market-place broke the old marquis himself, on his great black horse, with his gay dress glittering in the sunshine, and his face quiet and smooth as if he were going into a drawing-room ; but his lips were set together like the jaws of a wolf-trap. When I saw him coming, I shrank away, fearing that he would seize and devour me even among them all ; but I could see how he reined up his horse (the crowd parting before him to right and left), leaped from the saddle, and stood facing us, with his arms folded on his breast. *Morbleu !* I think I see him now, drawn up to his full height, with his lip curling in defiance, and his eye looking through us like the flash of a sword, as he said in his clear, scornful voice : " I am told that you have something to say to me. Here I am. What do you want ? " But there was no answer. At the sight of his face, and the sound of his voice, coming among us this way like an all-powerful master, the old fear of him and his, branded into us by ages of oppression, rose up again stronger than ever ; and the whole crowd of furious men hung their heads like rated schoolboys, and melted away before him. *Tonnerre de ciel !* tyrant and servant of the devil though he was, he did a deed that day worthy of the Twelve Paladins ; and perhaps the *bon Dieu* may yet have mercy upon him, for he was a brave man ! "

I recalled the weird pathos of the English ballad—

That Heaven may yet have more mercy than man
On such a bold rider's soul—

and looked with involuntary admiration upon this thoroughly French sympathy with courage even in a hereditary and implacable enemy. The old man was silent for an instant, while the momentary softness faded from his iron features, leaving them

sterner than before. When he resumed, his tone was deeper and more solemn.

" But although M. le Marquis escaped for that time, his day was near at hand ; for now came news that the people had marched upon Versailles, that the king and queen had been brought to Paris, that the *tiers* were up in every part of the country, and that the *Assemblée Nationale* had decreed the abolition of taxation, monopoly, aristocratic oppression, and had pronounced all men free and equal for evermore. Every fresh bit of news worked like fire in our blood ; and at last the people of Besançon got up as one man, and swore that, come what might, they would have the Château de Quesnoy down, and make an end of the old wolf that lived in it ; and up they went, hundreds upon hundreds.

" I can remember, as if it were yesterday, seeing them filing out of the town, their pike-heads glittering in the sun, and the mass of red caps shewing like a long smear of blood upon the white road ; and I, as a boy will do, followed them to see what would happen. They had expected to find the château barricaded, and to meet with some resistance ; but no ! the garden-gate was open—so was the hall-door—and on the threshold stood the old marquis himself, saying quietly : " Enter—all is ready for you ! " There was something in his voice, and look, and manner that made them shrink even then ; but they had gone too far to turn back. Into the château they poured, with shouts and laughter, and scraps of Republican songs, till every room was choke-full ; and the leaders took possession of the great banquet-hall, and set M. le Marquis in the great carved chair at the head of the table, swearing that he should see them drink his good wine before they killed him. And there they revelled till one-half of them were under the table, and the other half could hardly stand to light the torches which they had stuck up round the hall. Just about nightfall (I had climbed into a tree near the window, and could see all that went on), I saw old Mercandon, the steward, glide up to his master's chair, and say in a low voice : " M. le Marquis, all is ready ! "

" Are all the lackeys gone ? "

" All, M. le Marquis. "

" Go you too, then, and leave me to finish it alone ! "

" But the old steward only hung his head, and answered with a kind of sob : " M. le Marquis, I carried you in my arms when you were a child, and do you drive me away now ? "

" As you will, then, my good fellow, " said the marquis ; " I shall at least have *one* honest man beside me to the last. "

" And then he rose slowly to his feet (for, till that moment, he had sat like a statue), and looked round upon them all. Monsieur, if I live to a hundred, I shall never forget that sight ! —the old noble standing up like a tower, with the long gray hair falling back from his grand calm face ; the great vaulted hall, with its huge groined arches and dark panelling of oak ; the coarse figures of the peasants, loling in the great chairs or wallowing upon the floor, their rough faces all swollen and disfigured by drink, and fury, and lust of blood—the red torchlight flaring fitfully over all. There was *that* in the old man's face which silenced the loudest of the rioters ; and you might have heard a pin fall as he spoke :

"Worthy guests, you have done honour to my good cheer, and it is time that I thank you as you deserve. This is the first time that my château has been defiled by the hoofs of Republican canaille—and it shall be the last! Go, tell your master the devil how the last of the De Quesnoys repaid your insolence. Vive le roi!"

"He seized a flambeau which stood near him, and, stooping down, lifted a trap-door in the floor, and dropped the torch through it. And then (God preserve us!) came a crash as if the earth had split asunder, and all the air was one hot blast of fire, and I felt a shock like an earthquake, and knew nothing more.

"When I came to myself, I was lying on the soft earth of one of the flower-beds—dizzy and stunned, as if I had fallen from the top of a tower, but, thank God, unhurt. But, Holy Virgin! what a sight it was when I looked round! All about me was a reek of smoke and dust as from the mouth of a furnace; and dimly through the cloud I could see, on the spot where the château had stood, black broken walls, and great masses of stone flung here and there, and smoking timbers, and worse things than that—legs, and arms, and heads scattered on every side like the leaves in autumn. The marquis had filled the cellars with gunpowder, and of all who entered the château, not one was left alive! May the good God have mercy upon their souls!"

BEE TLES.

THAT class of insects which naturalists term Coleoptera, and in common parlance are known by the name of beetles, seem to have been studied with more interest and care than most other entomological species spread over the globe. The ancients knew them under the name of scarabæi; and almost all offer to the eye the bright colours of the rainbow, and the beautiful metallic effects, which have from the earliest time attracted the attention of men. There is no difficulty in distinguishing them from other insects, owing to their wings, which are four in number. The under ones are slender, marked with ramified nervures, folding and unfolding with remarkable facility when the insect takes its flight or settles on any object. The upper wings are of a hard texture, and form sheaths for the others; they are termed 'elytra,' and open at right angles to the body when flying, never beating or vibrating. Every year brings out a new book on this exhaustless subject. The beetles of France have not yet been described in full, though M. Mulsant of Lyon has been at work upon them for twenty-five years. Their name is legion, and it is asserted that not less than a hundred thousand varieties have been marked in different collections.

The individual species of scarabæi may be divided into seven principal classes, of which the first, that of the Cetonidæ, comprehends a series of beautiful insects, which feed on the juices of flowers. The golden beetle is one of the most charming; the country people call it the king of the beetles. It is of a golden green, with white spots; when it flies in the sun, scarcely raising the elytra, its whole body sparkles like polished metal. During the summer months, it lives in gardens, always choosing the most brilliantly coloured flowers on which to rest; it penetrates to the

heart of the roses and peonies, or settles on the petals of the honeysuckle, which it eats, sucking the honeyed liquid. It is perfectly inoffensive, does no harm to vegetation, and has not the unpleasant smell which belongs to many of the tribe. The females lay their eggs at the foot of trees among decayed wood, or even in the nests of ants. Here the young larvæ find their nourishment in woody morsels for three years, and then construct their cocoons, from which, in due time, the beetle emerges. One beautiful kind, found in the Philippine Islands, is so much admired by the ladies that they are kept as pets in small bamboo cages. The Brazilian species are of an immense size, and may be seen resting under the leaves of the maize plantations, or flying round the tops of the tallest trees. These, again, are surpassed in size by the Goliath, which is peculiar to tropical Africa. Collectors have been so anxious for specimens, and found them so difficult to obtain, that as much as fifty pounds has been given for one of these insects, which are the common food of the natives when roasted.

The sacred beetle of the Egyptians belongs to the Coprinæ; its singular instincts had without doubt much astonished them, for it is found on the most ancient monuments in the land of the Pharaohs depicted on amulets, placed in sarcophagi, and treated with the greatest veneration by the dwellers on the banks of the Nile. They were an agricultural people, and valued these great black insects for their habit of clearing away noxious substances. An oily substance which they secrete keeps their skins bright and glossy, so that none of the dirty matter among which they live can adhere to them. The fore-feet are armed with spines; whilst the hind ones are much longer, and suited for the work they have to perform. The care which the female takes for the preservation of its eggs and the development of its larvæ, is very curious. Instead of simply hiding them, like other beetles, in a lump of mud or some little cavity, where the egg is laid, she surrounds it with manure, and rolls it up into a little ball with her hind-legs; soon it is a solid, well-kneaded mass, with the egg in the centre. Already a choice has been made of a suitable place where the larvæ, when hatched, can find a living. Towards this point, she sets out, rolling the ball before her: meeting with some obstacle, or a rough piece of ground, she places the lump on her broad head, and thus carries it over. But should it prove insurmountable, she flies off to seek other aid, and soon returns with five or six others, who assist her by pushing on all sides, and thus carry the precious burden to its destination. Then the hole must be dug in which to deposit it—the fore-legs now come into play, being especially formed for spades—and when it is deep enough, the ball is rolled in, the hind-legs brush down the earth, and every trace of the hole disappears under the parent's indefatigable labour.

Among the class of the Melolonthidæ, the common cockchafer may be regarded as the type of the whole, and a very redoubtable enemy it can prove itself to be. In some years it appears during the month of April in prodigious numbers; its life lasts until June, and during all this time it is preying on the leaves of various trees—the maple, poplar, birch, beech, and oak. But it shews a marked preference for the elm, so that in France

the peasants call the flowering and fruit buds, cockchafer's bread. It is not uncommon to see whole forests on the continent entirely bare of leaves in the spring months, having been eaten up by these insects. But this is a slight evil compared with what they have already effected underground by living on the roots of cereals. The various metamorphoses of the insect in its underground life last for three years, during all which time it displays a wonderful voracity. When the females are ready to lay their eggs, they choose a light, well-cultivated soil, and burying themselves in it, perform their task. There are generally about forty young ones, which burst the shell in thirty days. Nature has armed them with powerful mandibles and a forked tooth, so that they set to work at once: should the temperature of the seasons be mild, they may pass through the change into beetles during the autumn of the second year, in which case they hide in some hole during winter, consuming the fat they have accumulated in their tissues, and issue forth in spring.

It has been remarked that the maggots are never found but in cultivated soil; thus they were almost unknown in ancient days, when agriculture was in its primitive condition. Now that every appliance is used to render the ground light and fruitful, the larvæ can push their way through; and after a warm day, when they have been tempted nearer the surface, whole fields, covered with green shoots, are at once changed into dried-up withered leaves and stems. The roots of the vegetables, grain, or colza, have been eaten, and soon perish by the same means. For this reason, the habits of this kind of beetle have been made a peculiar study on the continent, especially where their ravages are so much dreaded. M. Jules Reiset has elucidated many obscure and important points in the life of the larvæ underground; by the help of thermometers, he has ascertained the different depths at which they may be found, as they rise nearer the surface when the heat is greater. It was always supposed that frost would destroy them, but this proves to be a fallacious hope, as they bury themselves deeper, and can bear a very strong and lasting frost which completely hardens the surface. Indeed, they seem to be endowed with a singular amount of foresight, for when they leave the upper ground, they do so before the thermometer gives the indication of colder weather. About October they descend, and rise again in February, during all which months they are deprived of food, for the roots do not penetrate so deeply, and hunger, as well as a softening of the temperature, will have its effect on their movements.

It is about thirty years since the best way of destroying these troublesome insects was first discussed. Many persons laughed at the idea as unimportant, but by degrees the damage they have done in France has opened the eyes of agriculturists, and they have willingly entered into the subject which scientific observation has opened up. When the ground is in course of preparation for receiving the seed in the months of September and October, almost all the larvæ are near the surface; taking care not to plough the ground too deeply, they will in most cases be turned up, and the harrow, energetically used, will destroy the greater number; if, however, the plough is too deep, they will only be buried. In the spring, on those lands where root-crops are to be grown, additional care is required to

determine exactly at what distance from the surface they will be met with. Should they be too deep, the intelligent labourer will put off his preparation for a few weeks: without this precaution, the maggots, undisturbed by the ploughshare, and stimulated by a rise in the temperature, would ravage the young plants intrusted too soon to the ground, and it is well to defer the sowing until April. It is often advisable to work the ground at two different depths, and a woman or two children following will soon pick up the insects which come to the surface. It will scarcely be believed, but in France from five to ten thousand have been collected in a day by this means. It has been reckoned that every beet-root in a field will be attacked by two or three insects: there are fields which are literally infested; on one farm a hundred and seventy-two thousand were destroyed, at a cost of five shillings an acre, which was cheaply purchased, since the harvest of colza was magnificent, and the neighbouring farmers lost theirs entirely from the want of taking these precautions.

When the adult beetle has taken its flight, it is quite as necessary to continue the pursuit. Its way of life makes this comparatively easy. Beetles enjoy but three or four hours' activity during the twenty-four hours—a little after the rising and setting of the sun. It is then that their heavy droning sound may be heard as they traverse the air with their irregular, awkward flight—hitting against any obstacle that may come in their way. The remainder of their time is passed in drowsiness; settling on the under-side of leaves, they are so motionless and inert that the least shake suffices to detach them and roll them on the ground. Old men, women, and children make battues upon them just before the dawn, when the dew has not evaporated, and collect immense numbers by shaking the branches of trees and shrubs. Government offered prizes of ten or twenty francs for a hundred kilogrammes; this was found far too high a reward; the funds were soon absorbed, and though a less price was offered, there were still plenty of hunters.

Private individuals have also assisted. There is a large sugar-manufactory which uses for three or four months in the year two hundred thousand kilogrammes of beet-root a day. It became difficult to procure this supply from the neighbourhood, in consequence of the great increase of larvæ. The head of the concern offered twenty francs for every hundred kilogrammes of insects that were brought. Soon sacks full of them arrived; a caldron kept at boiling heat received their contents as they came, and a few instants sufficed to kill them, after which they were used as manure for the very fields they would have destroyed. In one season alone, twenty-eight millions of beetles were thus destroyed, which may be held to represent five hundred and sixty millions of larvæ, which would have preyed on the next two crops of beet-root. As it is not within the reach of every one to procure hot water in such quantities, other methods have been tried, such as crushing them between millstones, or throwing them into a ditch and covering them with quicklime. Neither has been approved: when the sacks were opened, the beetles, excited by the movement and the heat, flew away in great numbers, or the process of killing was too slow. It was then proposed by M. Reiset to use naphthaline, extracted from gas-tar,

which is a solid crystalline substance, having a very powerful odour, and emitting vapour at an ordinary temperature which is a certain poison to insects. Shut up in a barrel with this, the beetles soon die. He also tried it as a preventive means to frighten from the fields the females who were seeking a place in which to deposit their eggs; he mixed it with three times its weight of dry sand, and spread it over the ground. The experiment has not succeeded very well; it does not prevent the evil, but only drives it to another place. Turned out of one field by the poison, the females fly to a more propitious spot for the development of their species.

Another ingenious method has been proposed, which seems to reach the evil at its source, especially in those countries where ploughed land alternates with forests. It is founded on the observation that the adult cockchafer chooses more especially places that are planted with trees, so that cultivated earth in the neighbourhood of plantations is always preferred as the place where she would lay her eggs. M. Robert proposes to plough and manure carefully a strip of ground, a few yards in width, all round these forests, believing that the females would crowd together there. Thus all the larvæ of the country would be accumulated in one spot, where they might be more easily destroyed, especially as it is found by observation that for the first five or six months the young ones are always living in a family circle. In later life, they disperse, not finding sufficient food, and it becomes more difficult to reach them.

Under the three forms which these insects pass through in their successive metamorphoses, they contain substances analogous to those which form the tissues, and especially the newest growth, of vegetables. They are particularly rich in azote, which is classed among the most valuable of manures; in this respect, it has been calculated that they contain four times more than ordinary tillage, and the dried ones are quite equal to guano in a commercial point of view. Speculators also have turned their attention to making money by extracting oil from these insects, which was believed to possess extraordinary virtues; but much money was lost in the process, and though the oil was obtained, the expense of manufacturing swallowed up the profits. It is not man alone that wages war against these insects. Many of the feathered tribe are incessantly preying on them; rooks, jays, magpies, and partridges, with many of the songsters—nightingales, red-throats, and swallows—are their destroyers, and the mole eats them in all their stages.

Turning to another class; the Sexton beetles are well known throughout Europe, and are so called from their living on the bodies of any animal they can find. Should a dead mouse or mole be left in a field, they collect in large numbers around it; and as their intention is to lay their eggs in it, and so provide suitable food for the larvæ, they proceed to bury it, that it may not dry up or be eaten by other animals. Hollowing the ground beneath, and throwing out the earth, the animal gradually sinks down and is covered with the surrounding soil. About twenty-four hours suffices to conceal a mouse. The eggs are speedily laid, and the larvæ feed upon the putrid flesh until they are full grown, when they descend into the earth for three or four feet, and undergo their

metamorphoses. There is a very curious tribe found in Brazil, the body being immensely distended, and lying on the top of the back. They are generally found in the nests of the white ants, and do not lay eggs, but produce living larvæ. The Bombardier beetles derive their name from the apparatus of defence with which they are provided. Their habit is to hide under stones in large numbers, and when the stones are disturbed, they eject a quantity of vaporiferous fluid with a loud noise; it is pungent, acrid, and volatile, becoming a bluish vapour when mixed with the air. Chemical tests prove it to be a strong acid, which will produce a sense of burning on the skin.

It is to the family of beetles that the Cantharides belong, which have been used by the medical profession from the days of Hippocrates and Aretæus. Not unlike them in appearance are the pretty glow-worms, which light up the grassy banks of our southern hedgerows during the summer nights. It is the female only that possesses the phosphorescent light, which it can withdraw at pleasure; and it is not furnished with wings, so that its appearance is more like that of a larva than a beetle. Some species find their home in timber or planks instead of the ground. Every one knows the small holes which are to be seen drilled through the wooden floors of old houses; these are made when the larvæ change into beetles, and as they are nocturnal in their habits, they discover their whereabouts to their companions by striking their mandibles against the wood. From this simple noise has arisen the superstitious dread of invalids and nurses, who, in the dead of the night, hear the death-watch, and consider it as a summons to another world. Elm-trees suffer greatly from the attacks of a beetle of this class, whole forests being sometimes laid low under its insidious labours. The female makes a gallery beneath the bark, and boring side-alleys, lays an egg in each: when hatched, the young ones eat away in regular directions until the whole tree is pierced. In tropical countries, the larvæ are of a much larger size, and their ravages are more serious. The Titan, which is found in Guiana, revels in the undergrowth of that hot, damp district, where vegetation is exuberant; and the mimosa trees in the West Indies have their young shoots destroyed by a *Lamia*. M. Houliet, who once lived in the neighbourhood of Rio Janeiro, heard the sound of falling branches of trees belonging to the *Acacia* every night. On examination, he found they were sawn all round, but the pith was left untouched, so that they broke from their own weight when the wind blew upon them. It was supposed to arise from the mischief of the slaves; but on cutting into the branch, the larvæ of the *Oncideres* were found, and the beetle had no doubt cut round with its powerful jaws, to prevent the sap flowing in, which would interfere with the growth of its young.

In such a numerous family, only the most curious examples have been selected; but we may just mention the Lady-birds as belonging to it, as they are such favourites with little children. These pretty insects are common in all quarters of the globe, and are very valuable in checking the swarms of insects which infest roses and other plants. It is not in the adult state that they eat much, but the gray larvæ may be seen creeping up the stems and swallowing the lice in regular order. During the last few years, immense numbers have

appeared in the south of England, and have been described as extending in dense masses for miles. In conclusion, it may be said that the uses and instincts of beetles are most wonderful. Plants grow too fast, and the larvae settle on them; with wonderful appetite, they eat incessantly, and make haste to reach their full size. They fertilise the soil, by scattering decomposing matters, and thus prevent them from vitiating the air; whilst their gorgeous colours compete with those of the floral world, and add to the charms which nature offers to the observer.

A GOLDEN SORROW.

CHAPTER XXXVII.—HALCYON DAYS.

THE condition of a young, handsome, and rich widow has been pronounced by some cynical writers to be a very enviable one; and certainly when the husband, who has had to die in order to bring about that pleasant state of things, has not been much beloved, there is a good deal to say on that side of the question.

Miriam St Quentin was young, handsome, rich, and a widow. Was she happy, in her emancipation and her wealth? 'The world'—as the few people who know anything about one call themselves, and as we call them—would have been shocked just at first if it had been said that she was. It had really been such a model marriage, and Mr St Quentin such a dear old man, that she must feel it very much! Miriam's demeanour as a widow was no less commendable than her conduct as a wife. The period of seclusion which custom and her own good taste assigned to her would not more than suffice for the planning and organising of her future life. She still believed in such possibilities: a plan formed in haste had succeeded so thoroughly for her, that she was convinced she had only to set about the construction of an elaborate scheme, at leisure, to be equally secure of its realisation. If there was any point on which her mind was thoroughly made up, it was, that she had done no moral wrong. She knew she had broken human laws; but they are not infallible, and their intention is the prevention and the redress of injury, injustice, and cruelty. They cannot take account of every vagary and contrariety of circumstance, and modify themselves accordingly. Mr St Quentin had meditated a great injury, injustice, and cruelty to her, and she had prevented his carrying out that intention; against the law, indeed, because its formula was not with her, but not against its spirit, which is that of fairness and honesty.

She would do a great deal of good with her money. That intention figured largely in her plan. Among her vague notions of religion was an idea that God Almighty demands a tithe of all the possessions of the rich for His poor, and that penalties would be found, at the great settling of accounts, to attach to the neglect of this obligation. She would not neglect it, but fulfil it to the letter, and then go beyond it, into the spiritual realm of

charity, including personal ministration and active sympathy. Miriam had no idea of restitution or reparation in all this; she genuinely believed in her own right; but charity was a use for wealth which was very pleasant to her. She had always helped the poor largely from her private resources, but she had never known Mr St Quentin to do so. Well, this should all be changed. There should be a fixed system, and then a liberal margin.

Of course, Miriam made up her mind that she would not marry again. All young widows form this resolution. Either the lost happiness is never to be replaced, or the memory of it impaired, or the new and delicious freedom is never to be sacrificed to another venturesome risk: this is according to former circumstances. But Miriam had another reason, in addition to the second of these two, for arriving at this resolution. Henceforth, there must be a secret in her life; not burdensome to her indeed, justified by her own secret knowledge, but to be known only to herself and Walter. No third person must ever share it. If she were to permit herself to love any man—and she would now marry only in obedience to that unknown sentiment and impulse—she must impart that secret. Instinct told her this would be impossible. You see, Miriam had as yet learned only elementary lessons from life, and she was still applying the line and the plummet to an edifice of which Fate was to be the real arbitrary builder, while she was to look on, helpless and amazed.

She was not an absolute unbeliever in love; she was too sensible to slip into any cynical jargon on the subject. She knew that love existed, and formed the great principle, motive, and reward of many human lives. As a passion, she had little comprehension of it, and no esteem for it; but as a strong and abiding sentiment, she regarded it with admiring respect. But Miriam knew that one 'could not have everything in this world,' according to the trite, wise old saying, and she thought, on the whole, one might do very well without love. Her marriage had not been unhappy for want of love; she was quite sure she should never have missed *that*, or thought about it at all, if other drawbacks had not existed. And so, without undervaluing it in the least, she quietly put it aside, out of her calculations, in the scheme she was constructing for the future.

Miriam intended to have a house in London. She would retain the apartment in Paris, and divide her time pretty equally between the two capitals. She had not acquired a taste for rurality, and she was tired of travelling about the continent of Europe. Far off, in the recesses of her fancy, there lurked visions of more extended travel, when she should break conventional bounds, and see the ancient wonders of the earth in the East, and the modern achievements of science in the West; but these projects were in the far future. She had to set her new life going, to surround herself with fresh interests and duties, and make for herself a place in the sort of society to which she chose to

belong. In visits to the Firs—which she did not, somehow, contemplate as very frequent or much prolonged—she should find quite as much English country-life as she cared for. In occasionally sharing the home of Florence, Walter, and their prospective children—there was only one baby at the Firs as yet—she should have enough of the domesticities to preserve her from unwomanly callousness and isolation.

Miriam had passed months in Paris, after her return thither subsequent to Mr St Quentin's death. During two months of the four, she was not alone. Miss Monitor had at length realised the dream of many years of dreary drudgery in the providing of young ladies with every accomplishment under the sun. She had made enough money to retire from the occupation which many good people, whose destiny has not obliged them to keep schools, consider so very ennobling. If the honest collected testimony of school-mistresses could be procured, the result would probably be found to be the very reverse, and these often excellent women would acknowledge that nothing is so conducive to a sordid turn of mind and a general attitude of insincerity.

Miss Monitor was perfectly honest about it all. She was not only unfeignedly delighted to have the cottage and the cow—for which she had longed as persistently as Warren Hastings longed for Daylesford—but enchanted to have done with the occupation itself. She had never liked 'girls'; she inclined to believe nobody ever did like them, except their own mothers, and that in moderation, and she was frankly thankful to have done with them for ever more.

'Talk of breakings-ups and holidays, my dear!' she said to Miriam: 'what was their escape to *mine*? I'm sure it was a glimpse of heaven to feel the house so silent and so empty, and to see the box-room rid of their trunks!' It didn't last, though; there was the clearing-up for them to come back, almost as soon as I had got it well into my mind that they were gone.'

It was a great treat for Miss Monitor to go to Paris in the clear bright early spring-time, and to be shewn everything, except the theatres and 'company,' as she called it, by Miriam. She did not object to the exceptions; the theatres would have horrified, and French 'company' would have puzzled her; and Miriam was exquisitely kind to her good friend. To think of her having ever been afraid of Miss Monitor, and having regarded her as an emporium of mysterious learning!—Miss Monitor, who, in reality, was the simplest-minded of women, though knowing in her own former department—and in comparison with whom Miriam was a perfect sage in knowledge of the world. Now that no ulterior educational object was included in her visits, Miss Monitor enjoyed the museums, the buildings, the picture-galleries, the historic monuments, with a delicious intensity; and the long drives in Miriam's luxurious carriage, when, well wrapped up in furs, and regardless of time and temperature, the friends visited all the environs of Paris, were especially delightful to her.

There was only one particular in which Miriam did not fulfil Miss Monitor's expectations: she never talked of her late husband, that most gentle-

manly and admirable person, who had always been to Miss Monitor the *beau idéal* of all that one could wish a husband to be, who was, well, just a little older than might have been desired. She would have liked to hear 'all the particulars;' but Miriam did not indulge her with any. With this one exception, Miss Monitor's visit to Paris had been a perfect success. It was within a few days of its close now, and Miriam was thinking, with some reluctance, which she did not closely analyse, that she ought to accompany her friend back to London, and make her long deferred visit to the Firs.

Miss Monitor's cottage and cow were at Blackheath, and their proud proprietor was most anxious that Miriam should visit her and behold her in all the glory of possession. Miriam was tempted to accede to her request; the cottage would furnish a sufficiently retired base of operations for her, whence she might proceed to select her own house in London, conveniently communicate with Messrs Ross and Raby, and *when she must*, go on to the Firs.

When she must! Had it come to this with Miriam, and had she never asked herself why, and how? She had been wildly anxious to see her brother, and be with him; she had been prepared to make his conduct respecting Walter the subject of a quarrel between herself and her late husband, involving consequences which she could not calculate; and now, she had an indescribable, unconquerable shrinking from the idea of seeing Walter, a shrinking which extended to Florence. Why was this? Why should she contemplate calmly, whenever she was driven to the contemplation of it at all, more rarely as the time went by, the deed in which they had been accomplices, and yet be unable to contemplate calmly the prospect of being brought into daily contact with Walter? Why, above all, should she shrink from seeing Florence? Miriam could not quite shut out those questions; they would ask themselves of her; but she dismissed them with a shrug of her shoulders, and that ready, convenient word of explanation, 'Nervous!'

On a bright day, one of the latest in March, as crisp, as clear, as cold as that day, months ago, of which she is in some unaccountable way reminded, Miriam is in her boudoir, with the conservatory at the end, where the fountain is shedding its tinkling tears into the alabaster basin, and the bright-winged birds are fluttering and cooing behind the silver wires of the aviary.

A brisk wood-fire is burning upon the hearth, and Miriam's writing-table is drawn close to the fireplace. She has been very busy this morning. In anticipation of her absence from Paris—for she has made up her mind to go to England with Miss Monitor—she has been looking into her affairs, and setting apart sundry sums of money for various charitable purposes. Her table is covered with account-books and papers, but is very orderly for all that; and a row of little piles of napoleons and five-franc pieces is ranged at her left hand. These are to be given to her almoners, two Sisters of St Vincent of Paul, who visit the poor and sick in her neighbourhood, and who will come presently to receive this liberal contribution.

Miriam looks very handsome in her widow's dress, which has none of the eccentricities and exaggerations of the modern fashion in 'weeds.' Her bright hair is smoothly banded under the

crimped borders of her cap; and her large limpid golden eyes and broad low white brow are dignified, and lent an additional serene beauty, by the severe framework in which they are set. The cabinet of ebony, ivory, and silver stands at her right hand, between her chair and the fireplace. Its doors are open, one drawer is pulled out, and any one who cared to inspect its contents now would find among them the miniature of a handsome lady with gray eyes, black hair, and a fine complexion, whose name was Kate; the letter written by Lawrence Daly, at Walter's dictation, which Miriam had discovered among Mr St Quentin's papers; and a number of enigmatical memoranda, in which figures fill a considerable space, and which appear to refer to certain payments made at irregular intervals for some unspecified purpose.

But the memoranda which Miriam shewed to Walter at the *Grand Hotel* at Dover are not there; she has destroyed them; and all the events to which they referred, together with the rage and terror, the suspense, excitement, and the triumph of that time, are as utterly gone and lost sight of as they are.

Just as Miriam has concluded her pleasant task, Miss Monitor comes in, brisk and bright, light and talkative as ever, and full of the instructions which she has despatched to her cook at the cottage at Blackheath.

'Only that Ruth has had her feelings blunted by cooking for a girls' school for eight years, and is not easily put out, she might be alarmed at the idea of such a grand visitor as you, my dear!' said the happy little lady.

'I hope she has not left off making small currant dumplings with powdered sugar over them,' replied Miriam. 'If you only knew how often I have wished for one, since!'

'Dear me! The idea of any one ever wanting to eat anything again one has ever eaten at a school-room dinner!' said Miss Monitor simply. 'You shall have them, my dear, and then you will find out how nasty they are. Mercy on us, Miriam! Is all that money for the Sisters?'

'All that money is for the Sisters' poor people,' said Miriam; 'and it is sadly little among so many.'

'Well, my dear,' said Miss Monitor admiringly, 'I must say it is delightful to see money in such good hands as yours. And it is more than I expected of you, much as I liked you, for you were not very thoughtful or considerate, in the abstract, I mean—not unless you knew people, and liked them individually—in the old times. I think Mr St Quentin's influence and example must have done you a great deal of good, strengthened and developed your character. Don't you think so, Miriam?'

'I suppose it did,' answered Miriam indifferently. She was not to be tempted into talking of Mr St Quentin, and presently turned the conversation upon their journey; upon the pleasurable business of selecting a house for Miriam in London; and upon all that Miriam was to do and to enjoy when she should have the house. She was in high spirits that day; she was really happy. She did not talk to herself about it, but she thoroughly appreciated the difference which it had made in her life to be free from the presence of a person whom she had come to dislike. She felt this so strongly, that she,

who had never known love, sometimes asked herself—when the subject would persist in pressing upon her attention, would not be put away—whether the presence of the beloved could be such an ever-delightful, conscious, precious source of happiness, as the absence of any one to dislike; the freedom from daily, hourly, jarring chords in one's existence. Everything seemed to be going perfectly smooth and easy with Miriam now, and she looked as if it was so, handsome, grand, happy, generous, authoritative. Of future possibilities for her heart, she had neither hope nor fear; of future possibilities for her intellect, she had great store of hopes and plans.

Mr St Quentin's notion of pleasant society had not comprised intellect. Fashion, if not of the very first rank, of a very good second rank, he had aspired to with some success, and he did not mind its being combined with dullness, as for the most part it was. Miriam did. She had delightful visions of the society of 'clever' people, of a charming house which should be frequented by charming creatures who wrote books, painted pictures, composed music, and understood the art of conversation. She had heard the word 'Bohemian' somewhere, and she believed she knew what it meant. There should be no Bohemianism in her 'literary and artistic circle'; all the artists, authors, composers, and talkers should be quite respectable, but highly gifted. She revealed these great designs to Miss Monitor, who received them coldly. Miriam was hardly ever silly, and a little silliness once in a way was easily pardoned by her good friend.

'You can try it, my dear,' she said dubiously. 'You may remember I told you my father was an author—in the solid, biographical line—and he is as much forgotten as if he had been one of the modern three-novels-in-three-volumes-each-a-year-people. He used to say there was no such mistake as literary society; no duller people anywhere than authors and artists, chiefly, I suppose, because they are generally very tired with hard work, and want people to amuse them. I can't say I cared for any of them whom I used to see when I was a girl, especially if I had liked their books or their pictures very much before I made their acquaintance. They certainly never amused me. However, as I said before, you can try.'

Miriam thought this was all rubbish, and resolved that she would try.

The last few days in Paris were very pleasant to the friends. Miriam was rather sorry to leave her pretty rooms when the time came, even for the prospect of novelty in her London home. She loved them, she prized everything in them. She was very generous, but she had acquisitiveness largely developed in her character. If she had been a man, she would have delighted in adding field to field, in flocks and herds, and in money-bags, though she would have dispensed their contents with a liberal hand. Being a woman, she loved her furniture, her rich carpets and hangings, the beautiful things which filled her rooms, her plate, and her porcelain, her equipages, and her jewels. She would have shared them lavishly, but she loved them every one, she who had never known what it was to love, beyond the calm circle of kindred, and had no notion of a power which could smite these idols from their place in her heart, and dash them into dust.

A few hours after Miriam and Miss Monitor had

left Paris, a well-appointed but plain *coupé* drew up at the great gate of the hotel, and a gentleman stepped out and accosted the *concierge*. This gentleman was a dapper personage, of middle height and spare figure, with a clean shaven face and shrewd observant eyes. He was dressed with an accurate plainness and elaborate neatness which gave him somewhat the air of an Anglican clergyman of High Church principles. Since Mr St Quentin's death, this gentleman had not been seen at the hotel, and the present *concierge*, being new to the place, did not know him. After a few minutes' parley, the dapper gentleman committed a card and a letter to the care of the *concierge*, got into the *coupé* again, and was driven away.

At the same moment, one of Mrs St Quentin's servants, whom she had left in Paris, came in at the *porte cochère*.

'Hold!' said the *concierge*. 'Here has been a little Monsieur inquiring for Madame; and much chagrined at her departure. He has confided to me this letter and card, to be sent to the address of Madame.'

The servant leaned on the ledge of the little window through which the *concierge* addressed him, and inspected these articles.

'Hold!' said he. 'Monsieur Caux! Why comes he hither again? It used to be for Monsieur only.'

'Who is he, this Monsieur Caux?'

The man laughed. 'What know I? Ask that in the Rue Jerusalem.'

'Ho, ho! Is he there? That understands itself—these old gentlemen, as they tell me Monsieur was, have lived, in ordinary, and find agents who may be trusted, convenient. But why?'

'I have changed my mind,' said a clear, quiet, polite voice behind the servant's shoulder, causing him to start away from the aperture, and the *concierge* to look up surprised, 'and will forward my letter to Madame St Quentin myself, if you can give me her address in England.'

'Certainly,' said the *concierge*, on whom the mention of the Rue Jerusalem in connection with the name of M. Caux had produced a salutary effect. 'Perhaps Monsieur will copy the address himself,' and he laid a book open before M. Caux, from which that gentleman transcribed on one of his cards Miriam's address at Blackheath; while he was doing this, the servant went on into the hotel.

'That is much better,' said M. Caux, as he carefully replaced the letter in a case, full of neatly folded papers, suspended in the carriage within easy reach of his hand—'much better. She might take no notice of a written application, but she can hardly refuse me a personal interview, demanded on the strength of this. There may be something to come of it, and there may be nothing—time will shew. The old gentleman paid me in full; I have no claim; still this *may* be worth another fee to me, and it will certainly keep until she returns from London.'

'Madame had left Paris that morning,' had been the answer of the *concierge* to M. Caux's question. Only a few hours, only an unpurchasable, immeasurable, irreparable space between her and the knowledge she might have gained of the truth! The letter which M. Caux had decided to retain till her return was addressed to himself, and consisted of only a few lines, dated from New York, three months before, but which, by some accident,

never explained, had not been posted until the last mail. The lines were as follows: '*L—D— intends to go to England in the spring, and will then communicate with Mr St Quentin.*'

CHAPTER XXXVIII.—A TERROR OF GREAT DARKNESS.

On a bright soft April day, Miriam arrived at the Firs. She had chosen her house in London, and set decorators and upholsterers to work upon it. She had brightened up Miss Monitor's life by her visit to the cottage, her admiration of the cow, and her promise to repeat these kindnesses; and now she had come, still with reluctance, but with good courage also, to the ordeal of meeting Walter. It seemed to her that this was the only thing she should have to dread henceforth in life, and that, the meeting, the first look into each other's eyes, the first few minutes passed together, without the presence of any other person, over, this phantom—for she held it a mere phantom—would be laid, like the rest, and her way would be quite plain. So, when the time which had been arranged for her visit came, she went to the trial calmly.

Florence was in great delight. The prospect of having Miriam in her old home with Walter, in unrestricted freedom, all the former misery and dissension utterly gone for ever; and that most wonderful of all babies to be shewn to his aunt, was as much happiness as Florence could desire in this world, now that her Walter was at home 'for good.' She did not actually say to herself that it was very pleasant to make up their family party without Mr St Quentin; she would have been shocked to find herself thinking anything so dreadful, but she certainly was a little curious to see how Miriam looked in her weeds, and fully expected to find her in capital spirits. Florence was a pretty picture in those days. In the fulness of her happiness, the realisation of her thoroughly feminine ideal, her beauty had matured, and the added self-possession of her manner took nothing from its gentleness and its grace. She was as busy as a bee, but she was not fussy, and she was not narrow. Her whole heart was centered in her home and its beloved inmates; but her intellect overstepped that boundary, and Florence Clint was as perfect an example as could be found of a true woman who, incapable of the moral discord implied in deserting her own sphere, assiduously aspires to the best standard of duty and culture within it.

The sisters-in-law were both beautiful, each in her own style and way; but there was more than the difference between them of stature, complexion, and temperament. There was the difference between the childless wife and the mother; between the woman who has never loved and the woman who from girlhood has borne the sacred burden of solicitude and care for another, the weight of a double life. When Florence thought most lovingly of Miriam, she pitied her most for this. And Miriam did not pity herself in the least. She had never wished for children, and she had been content to do so without love in the past, and contemplated a picture in which it was to have no place, with complacency. The spectacle of Florence's domestic happiness would have for Miriam no drop of bitterness, no suggestion of envy.

Miriam had expected to find Walter at the station at Drington, and had prepared herself to get over, during the drive to the Firs, the only nervousness she anticipated having to feel. But Florence was on the platform when the train came up, without Walter; and then Miriam thought her brother was shrinking from the meeting even more than she was. Florence was not surprised. As they were rattling along in her pretty pony-carriage, she told Miriam he was delighted she was coming, but he was dreadfully lazy—sometimes it was really too bad—and he hated driving the ponies. Miriam asked if he rode. But it appeared he did not; he hated riding, said it shook him, and made his head ache. He liked staying in the house best, it seemed, and was so fond of playing with baby that he was to be forgiven for apparent laziness on that account. Miriam thought it was very real laziness, and decided in her own mind that Walter must have altered very much since his 'digger' days. The two women looked furtively at one another during the drive; and Miriam then told Florence frankly she had not believed she could have grown so very pretty, so much more than pretty; but Florence did not tell Miriam she had been curious to see her in her weeds.

Walter met them at the door, and he greeted Miriam with frank, unembarrassed affection. Her heart beat heavily, and she felt that her face turned exceedingly pale as she returned his kindly kiss, and looked into his eyes for that pang of recollection which she was prepared to find there. But she did not see it. There was not the slightest shrinking of his eyes from hers, not the most fleeting change of colour or hesitating inflection of the voice. He bade her welcome as if they had met last under the most ordinary circumstances, and was so spontaneously cheerful and unconcerned, that Miriam found it difficult to impute his demeanour to self-control. She felt there was much greater power in that way in herself than in Walter, and yet she could not reach his composure on this occasion. They all entered the house together; and Florence went for the wonderful baby, leaving Walter and Miriam together in the study.

'Now,' she thought, 'there will be a reference. Now he will say or look something, and then it will be over for the future.'

But he neither looked nor said anything. He talked of her house in town, and pointed out some improvements in Florence's flower-garden. And then Florence came in with the baby, and after a family offering of incense to that small divinity, they adjourned to dress for dinner. Miriam was relieved, and yet puzzled; she could not understand her brother, she felt somehow as if this man were not Walter. Their brief, eventful interview at Dover had been so momentous she had had no time to think of him, to take note of the change in his appearance; except his gray hair, she had not observed any. But she did now; she noticed his indolent manner, his sleepy expression, and his look of age. She must question Florence about his health.

At dinner, Walter was very lively and agreeable; but Miriam, observing him closely, saw that there was a curious indecision about him. There was not much carving done at table, but Florence did it all. Walter paid no attention to anything but his own dinner; and even about that was slow and

awkward, letting his fork drop, and upsetting his wine-glass. As the ladies were leaving the dining-room, Florence leaned over his shoulder, and said: 'Don't be long over your wine. Miriam wants to hear all about the gold-diggings to-night; so don't go to sleep here.'

'Does he go to sleep after dinner?' asked Miriam.

'Indeed, he does,' replied Florence. 'Isn't it a horrid habit? Almost every evening I have to go and shake him up; and sometimes he falls asleep after luncheon. Indeed, I often tell him he has quite an unfair allowance of sleep in his life.'

'Do you think that is safe, Florence? Good for him, I mean? What does he really do, dear? What are the occupations of his life?'

'The occupations of his life? Well—I can hardly tell you. He is not agricultural, you know, so we've let the home-farm; and he's not fond of gardening, it makes his head ache. A great many things make his head ache since he had that terrible fever.'

'Does he manage the place well?—look after things, and all that?'

'Well, indeed, I cannot say he does,' said Florence, laughing; 'he says I do all that sort of thing better than he does, and that it tires him. He does not even care about the stables. I'm afraid, Miriam, I must confess he's lazy; but you must not blame him. He had to work so hard for such a long time! And he is so sweet-tempered, and so fond of baby and me, and no trouble in the house. You won't mind him being what he calls "all about" a good deal, will you, Miriam? He is not a bit like other men, interfering with women's occupations and bothering them.'

'I sha'n't mind it in the least, dear,' replied Miriam, who was thinking—'He may not be a bit like other men, but he is also not in the least like my brother Walter.' And she went on. 'Is he fond of reading?'

'He does not care for reading to himself, but he likes me to read to him, and I do, when I have time. But I have been threatening him to leave off lately, he falls asleep so often.'

'That was a very bad fever, was it not, he had just at the time our father died?'

'O yes, dreadful! You may imagine how frightened I was when he was ill in the winter, after he left you at Dover; and Mr Martin said it was a strange kind of fever, with which he was not familiar. I did not tell you at the time, because you had so much to distress you,' said Florence in her simple way; 'and it would have been time enough for you to know, if it had been absolutely necessary to alarm you about him; and it did not last long. Mr Martin said, when Walter recovered, that he had treated the fever almost at random; but he had certainly treated it successfully. He was very weak and quiet for a long time, and seemed rather indifferent about everything except me, and baby when baby came; but it left no bad effects, thank God!'

'I am not by any means so sure of that,' thought Miriam. 'Was he delirious in the fever?'

'O yes: his mind wandered awfully. But Mr Martin said that was better. There must have been stupor if it hadn't. He frightened me first, and made me think it was not a feverish cold, but fever, by talking about an old man in an Indian gown and a red night-cap making a will, and

looking in the *Times* for somebody to leave his money to.—Why, Miriam, you are as pale as death! Perhaps you don't like to hear about anything of that kind.'

'I do, indeed—I do. I only turned pale at the idea of Walter's having been in such danger.'

'As I have done many a time, when I have thought that he might have died of the first fever out in that horrid place; and Mr Daly too; and we might never have heard anything about either of them. And he must have died, if it had not been for Mr Daly. I wish you could hear Walter tell the story himself; but he must not. I never mention it to him.'

'Why?'

'Because it distressed him so much. Mr Daly, you know, had the fever before Walter took it, and he never quite got over the effect of it. He is, or was, when Walter and he parted, a little eccentric—it was a delusion—which grew up in the fever, and never left him. I will tell you about it some other time; I must go and wake Walter now. If I didn't, he would sleep there for hours.'

With a sweet, happy smile on her untroubled face, Florence left Miriam, who was much, though vaguely disturbed by what she had just heard. Subsequent observation of Walter did not tend to reassure her. Before her first day at the Firs had reached its conclusion, Miriam's mind was so fully engaged in puzzling speculations concerning her brother, that she had ceased to think about the mutual associations between herself and him, of which she had tremulously looked for the indications.

Walter came back with Florence. He had been asleep, he acknowledged, and perhaps that accounted for his looking pale and stupid, and for an uncertainty in his gait which his sister observed at once. During the whole evening he sat still. He talked to them, and was very happy; but where was the restlessness so characteristic of men in health, when they are under no restraint? If Walter had walked up and down, in his old way, while he told them his Californian stories, Miriam would have liked it much better. Florence sat on a footstool beside his chair, resting her head against his knee, looking up at Miriam; and when he paused, as he often did, for a name or a word, she smilingly supplied it. And this not only when the topic was his Californian adventures, but when, later, they strayed into ordinary subjects of conversation, and Walter would pause, not from the suspension of the mechanism of speech called stuttering, but from an evident lapse of memory. Then Florence would speak the lost word, and he would go on. Again, for a few moments, before they separated for the night, Walter and Miriam were alone together. This time she determined, anything being better than the vague, mysterious alarm which was creeping over her, to lead him directly to the subject in her thoughts.

'Walter,' she said, 'will you let me tell you how much I felt about meeting you, after all that had passed, and'—

'Of course. I know; but don't talk of it, Miriam. I would have come to you, in your trouble, if I could, but I was very ill, you know. Caught cold, and had a fever. It really was not my fault.'

'Would have come to me, Walter? Why, you did come to me!'

'Yes, yes; I started, after you telegraphed, of

course; but there was nothing in that, you know; I could not go on, and indeed I hardly know how I got home. But don't let us talk of it, Miriam; I hate unpleasant subjects.'

Miriam obeyed him. Indeed, she could not speak. To utter astonishment was added a thrill of indescribable dread. For a moment she actually felt afraid of Walter himself, sitting there, in his chair, before her, perfectly calm, and making her this unaccountable reply. He was talking of the second time she had sent for him; she, of the first, and yet, the second summons had been by letter, not by telegraph. Miriam said no more; but, when Florence was with her up-stairs, in her own old room, she questioned her as closely as she dared about Walter's illness. Florence answered her freely, and, being skilfully led up to the point by Miriam, told her it was such an odd thing that Walter had forgotten all about his having gone to Dover, and was in the utmost distress at his inability to comply with Dr Ashley's summons.

'Mr Martin said it was part of the delirium of the fever,' added Florence, 'and told me not to talk to him about it at any time, and so, of course, I have not done so. Let me brush your hair, Miriam, for the sake of old times!'

Then the two young women drifted into a sentimental, reminiscent conversation, which, however, did not so far divert Miriam from the matter in her thoughts, but that she resolved to discuss it with Mr Martin at the first opportunity.

The opportunity offered itself on the next day but one. Mr Martin, and Mrs Cooke, and many others among the neighbourhood, who had once stood aloof from the Firs, but had been won, to a man and a woman, by Florence, were all anxious to see how the young, handsome, and rich Mrs St Quentin looked in her weeds. The result of this laudable curiosity was an impromptu luncheon party at the Firs, and a general stroll in the gardens and plantations—where the young green 'tassels' were beginning to hang themselves out—afterwards. Miriam detached Mr Martin from the party, and entered upon the matter in her thoughts with characteristic promptitude and directness, by asking him to give her a detailed account of Walter's illness at the time of Mr St Quentin's death.

Mr Martin complied; and Miriam learned from his narrative that her brother had been ailing from the moment of his return to the Firs, and that delirium had set in very rapidly. He described the wandering of the mind, and repeated much to which she had the key. Mr Martin acknowledged that he had believed Walter's mental condition to be unsound for some time after Florence thought him perfectly well again, but he had no suspicion that anything of the kind now existed. He had not seen much of him since his recovery, having been away from Drington for nearly three months; in his professional capacity he had, since his return, visited only the sovereign and all-absorbing baby, and he had not taken particular notice of Walter. Miriam, who could not explain the chief source, the real inspiring cause of her disquiet, laid great stress upon his somnolence and indolence; but she did not impress Mr Martin very seriously.

'The truth is, my dear,' he said, 'I am accustomed to regard Walter as such an uncommonly lucky dog, that I am not surprised to find him turning out an uncommonly idle one also. With

such a wife to adore him—a woman as clever as she is good; nothing that *must* be done to do; plenty of money; the remembrance of very hard work, which makes a holiday life apt to prolong itself, and a fine natural capacity for indolence—you must permit me to remind you, my dear, that Walter never *liked* work of any kind—I really think we need not put his laziness down to any more recondite cause than content.'

'Do you think it is content that makes him look so old, ten years older than his age, and at least five years older than climate can account for? Is it content that makes him drop all sorts of things out of his hands, and look vacantly at them when they fall? Is it content that makes him lie down on the sofas all about the house, whenever there's no one to watch him and rouse him up, and renders him almost insensible to pain?'

'What!' said Dr Martin; 'Walter insensible to pain? He used to be quite the reverse.'

'He gave himself one of the worst cuts I ever saw, this morning, with a broken pane of glass in the conservatory, and I don't think he knew he had cut himself. I was close by, and I knew nothing, until I saw blood on baby's frock, and found it came from Walter's hand.'

'That's bad,' said Dr Martin. 'Anything more?'

'Many things more. He hardly ever speaks without stammering, and he constantly stands with his eyes shut. Florence notices none of these things; she is always with him, and is the most serene-minded and adaptive of women. Besides—Mr Martin, pray attend to this—he eats a great deal more than he ought to eat.'

'My dear Miriam, this is one of your French notions.'

'Indeed, it is not. I think French people eat a great deal more than English people—it is my observation. I don't like the quantity he eats, or the way in which he eats it. You dine with us to-day; will you promise me to watch him, and judge for yourself?'

'I will.'

They rejoined the party; and Miriam saw that Mr Martin kept an unseen watch upon Walter during the whole of that day. In the course of the week, he came several times to the Firs, and though he said nothing to her on the subject, she was satisfied that he was steadily taking observations, and that those observations were leading him in the direction of the apprehensions which she, for a reason far outweighing any within his ken, entertained more and more keenly day by day. The unconsciousness of Florence, while it was most fortunate, touched Miriam deeply. When anything odd, unusual, uncouth, in Walter's demeanour made itself apparent, Florence was only anxious to conceal it, if possible; and if that were not possible, to account and apologise for it in some simple way. To keep him from the possibility of being blamed by *others*, was her object; it never occurred to her to read the meaning of these things to *himself*.

When Miriam had been a fortnight at the Firs, during which time Mr Martin had rarely allowed a day to elapse without a visit, he said to her: 'When is your house in town to be ready for occupation?'

'At the end of next week, I expect.'

'I advise you to go there, to hasten the preparations by your presence, and to dispense with all

superfluous arrangements. My dear Miriam, you are right, fearfully right, about poor Walter. I have watched him too closely now to be mistaken. You must get him and Florence up to London, immediately, on the best pretext you can devise. When you have them there, she must be told the truth, and the best advice in the profession must be procured without delay. There has been too much of that already—though, whether advice is ever of any use in such cases is more than doubtful.'

'God help him and her!' said Miriam.

And so the first blow was dealt by Fate to that fair structure of hope and purpose which Miriam had built; a blow which caused it to rock and tremble to its foundations. This involved all whom she loved in the world. They were not many—two human beings only—but Miriam loved her brother and his wife with all the intensity and depth of such concentration; and the agony, not only of her own suffering, but of the compassion she felt for them both, almost unseated her reason. But the demand for action was too imminent, the necessity for concealment was too absolute, to admit of any yielding on Miriam's part which the utmost strength of her will could subdue. She bore it, not blindly, not listlessly, but with a keen-sighted intelligence which looked it through and through, which saw it all, and foresaw it all, every phase of the humiliating withdrawal of the animating spirit from the form of the one, every successive wrench in the process of the breaking of the strong, loving, simple heart of the other.

Of a truth, her palace of pride and pleasure rocked and reeled.

Three days later, Miriam was in London, at her house in Lowndes Square, where a few rooms had been prepared for her occupation. A pretext was found for getting Florence up to town, in Miriam's wish to avail herself of her taste in the finishing of the house. Unconscious Florence was quite pleased. She wished Walter had shewn more interest about it, but he merely assented. He would brighten up when he found himself in town. A day was fixed for their arrival with the baby and their servants. Mr Martin was to come to London also, but without their knowledge, and not to Miriam's house. He would arrange for a consultation with certain famous physicians, and then Florence must be told—something—must be to some extent prepared.

'If she does not read it in my face the moment she crosses the door,' said Miriam half aloud, as she stood leaning her head on her raised hands, turned with their open palms against the wall, in a room of her London house, as she had stood, one night in Paris, by the wires of her aviary, in the perplexity of a far less trouble. 'I could bear it for him, but I cannot bear it for her. O Florence, Florence!'

A bell rang loudly, and Miriam started from her forlorn attitude, and looked into the street, with a momentary terror lest they had already arrived. Absurd! They could not be here for hours yet. How she dreaded seeing Walter now! What had that former dread, which she had almost forgotten, been to this? If he should be more vacant, more indolent, more forgetful, more gluttonous! If—What else *must* he be? There could be nothing else but sinking lower and lower until the blank was reached. How awful! how awful! Would to God that he, her brother whom she loved, might die first! She turned her white, miserable face at

the sound of a step. A servant approached her, with a card on a salver.

She took the card, and read: 'Mr Lawrence Daly.'

FLY LEAVES.

ONE who has the reputation of a philosopher once wrote that the greatest terror of poverty lay in its power to render one ridiculous. This sage had probably never been a Warwickshire labourer, having to provide for a wife and eight children out of twelve shillings a week (and much less when on strike), or he would have known that there were worse things than being laughed at. Yet, without doubt, it is a very unpleasant sensation. Of course there are many folks so stupid, or so conceited, that they are unaware when they make themselves the objects of ridicule; but most people know when they have said, and much more have written, something liable to be pooh-poohed. Even a Thackeray, while scourging Snobbism with fish-hooks, must needs add: 'And yet you and I, reader, are as great snobs as anybody at heart'—not from the secret consciousness of his own weakness, or at least not so much so, as to absolve himself from the imputation of setting himself up as a model of virtue in the matter. The great satirist was content to let half his satire lose its edge, nay, half its social lessons lose their value, rather than expose himself to a sneer. Dickens, on the other hand, never sacrificed a sentiment, much less a principle, to the fear of ridicule. But then Dickens was a very great man indeed. To independence of this sort, a high state of education is adverse: the satin-skinned racer starts and shudders at the cur's bark, of which the less highly trained horse takes little notice. In the circles of town fashion, epigrams strike deep, and rankle; in the Country, no one feels them, though you let them fly till, like the arrows of the Persians, they darken the air—a metaphor which, being derived from the classics, brings us naturally enough to the author of *Fly Leaves*.*

If C. S. C.—or, to disclose 'a secret known to all,' Mr Calverley—had not been so good a scholar, he would certainly not have frittered away his undoubted talent upon translations; and if less cultivated generally, it is probable that he would himself have been pathetic, instead of confining himself to turning other people's pathos into fun. It has been said by a writer well acquainted with the Poor, that the one sense only which they have not in common with the Rich is the sense of humour: and perhaps if C. S. C. could be a Warwickshire labourer (which we may take it for granted he is not), and be on strike for a week or two, it would tone down his exuberant cynicism, by making him wish, what he now affects to doubt, that 'Life were all Beer and Skittles,' and benefit both himself and his readers. However, let the latter accept him for what he is—the most amusing of versifiers—and be thankful. There is nothing in the once famous *Rejected Addresses* equal to 'The Wanderers' in the book now lying before us, as a specimen of pure parody; and few of us, I fear, will be able to read the Laureate's

'Brook' again without its murmur being associated with the tale of the travelling tinker.

I loiter down by thorp and town;
For any job I'm willing;
Take here and there a dusty brown,
And here and there a shilling.

I deal in every ware in turn,
I've rings for buddin' Sally
That sparkle like those eyes of her'n;
I've liquor for the valet.

I steal from th' parson's strawberry-plots,
I hide by th' squire's covers;
I teach the sweet young housemaids what's
The art of trapping lovers.

The things I've done 'neath moon and stars
Have got me into messes;
I've seen the sky through prison bars,
I've torn up prison dresses:

I've sat, I've sighed, I've gloomed, I've glanced
With envy at the swallows
That through the window slid, and danced
(Quite happy) round the gallows:

But out again I come, and shew
My face, nor care a stiver;
For trades are brisk and trades are slow,
But mine goes on for ever.

Then, to complete the rout of our favourite poem, this blank verse follows, with a dreadful reminder in it of Laurence Aylmer and of the farm where Katie's Katie dwelt:

Thus on he prattled like a babbling brook.
Then I: 'The sun has slipt behind the hill,
And my aunt Vivian dines at half-past six.'
So in all love we parted; I to the Hall,
They to the village. It was noised next noon
That chickens had been missed at Syllabub Farm.

Again, who that has read *The Ring and the Book*, and who has not read (a little bit of) it, can fail to recognise its congener in 'The Cock and the Bull;' or in the wicked simplicity of the 'Ballad,' the unintelligible jargon of a too popular school of modern rhymsters:

Her sheep followed her, as their tails did them.
(Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese)
And this song is considered a perfect gem,
And as to the meaning, it's what you please.

Most cordially do we echo Mr Calverley's sentiments as expressed in 'Lovers, and a Reflection:'

O if billows and pillows, and hours and flowers,
And all the brave rhymes of an elder day,
Could be furled together, this genial weather,
And carted, or carried on wafts away,
Nor ever again trotted out—ay me!
How much fewer volumes of verse there'd be!

But *Fly Leaves* is not all parody, though it is all 'most excellent fooling.' Sometimes our author becomes a disciple of Horace, and compels, most happily, that poet of the Clubs to adapt himself to the present time, as in 'Contentment:'

Friend, there be they on whom mishap
Or never or so rarely comes,
That, when they think thereof, they snap
Derisive thumbs:

And there be they who lightly lose
Their all, yet feel no aching void;
Should aught annoy them, they refuse
To be annoyed:

* *Fly Leaves*. By C. S. C. Bell and Daldy.

And fain would I be e'en as these !
Life is with such all beer and skittles ;
They are not difficult to please
About their victuals :

The trout, the grouse, the early pea,
By such, if there, are freely taken ;
If not, they munch with equal glee
Their bit of bacon :

And when they wax a little gay,
And chaff the public after luncheon,
If they're confronted with a stray
Policeman's truncheon,

They gaze thereat with outstretched necks,
And laughter which no threats can smother,
And tell the horror-stricken X
That he's another.

In snow-time if they cross a spot
Where unsuspected boys have slid,
They fall not down—though they would not
Mind if they did :

When the spring rosebud which they wear
Breaks short and tumbles from its stem,
No thought of being angry e'er
Dawns upon them ;

Though 'twas Jemima's hand that placed,
(As well you ween) at evening's hour,
In the loved button-hole that chaste
And cherished flower.

And when they travel, if they find
That they have left their pocket-compass
Or Murray or thick boots behind,
They raise no rumpus,

But plod serenely on without :
Knowing it's better to endure
The evil which beyond all doubt
You cannot cure.

When for that early train they're late,
They do not make their woes the text
Of sermons in the *Times*, but wait
On for the next ;

And jump inside, and only grin
Should it appear that that dry wag,
The guard, omitted to put in
Their carpet-bag.

Although the idea of being mistaken for a preacher would greatly shock Mr Calverley, he occasionally follows the example of the divines in extracting from the smallest incident a social homily. There was a certain climax of British Snobbiism recorded in the *Times*, a few years ago, in relation to cherry-stones: the Prince of Wales was eating cherries in a public garden, and as he dropped the stones, some loyal lady picked them up and pocketed them, in order, doubtless, to bequeath them as a rich legacy unto her issue. In 'Precious Stones—an incident in modern history,' we have this touching incident embalmed :

My Cherry-stones! I prize them,
No tongue can tell how much!
Each lady-caller eyes them,
And madly longs to touch!
At eve I lift them down, I look
Upon them, and I cry;
Recalling how my Prince 'partook'
(Sweet word!) of cherry-pie!

To me it was an Era
In life, that Dejeuner!
They ate, they sipped Madeira
Much in the usual way.
Many a soft item there would be,
No doubt, upon the carte:
But one made life a heaven to me:
It was the cherry-tart.

Lightly the spoonfuls entered
That mouth on which the gaze
Of ten fair girls was centred
In rapturous amaze.
Soon that august assemblage cleared
The dish; and—as they ate—
The stones, all coyly, reappeared
On each illustrious plate.

And when His Royal Highness
Withdrew to take the air,
Waiving our natural shyness,
We swooped upon his chair.
Policemen at our garments clutched:
We mocked those feeble powers;
And soon the treasures that had touched
Exalted lips were ours!

One large one—at the moment
It seemed almost divine—
Was got by that Miss Beaumont:
And three, O three, are mine!
Yes! the three stones that rest beneath
Glass, on that plain deal shelf,
Stranger, once dallied with the teeth
Of Royalty itself.

Let Parliament abolish
Churches and States and Thrones:
With reverent hand I'll polish
Still, still my Cherry-stones!
A clod—a piece of orange-peel—
An end of a cigar—
Once trod on by a Princely heel,
How beautiful they are!

Years since, I climbed Saint Michael
His Mount: you'll all go there
Of course, and those who like'll
Sit in Saint Michael's Chair:
For there I saw, within a frame,
The pen—O heavens! the pen—
With which a Duke had signed his name,
And other gentlemen.

'Great among geese,' I faltered,
'Is she who grew that quill!'
And, Deathless Bird, unaltered
Is mine opinion still.
Yet sometimes, as I view my three
Stones with sweet thoughtful brow,
I think there possibly might be
E'en greater geese than thou.

Judging from the index of *Fly Leaves*, you would imagine it to be the most romantic of volumes; you would never think that 'Lines on hearing the Organ' referred to a hurdygurdy; or that 'The Arab' was a study of a London newspaper boy:

I shrink from thee, Arab! Thou eat'st eel-pie,
Thou evermore hast at least one black eye;
There is brass on thy brow, and thy swarthy hues
Are due not to nature, but handling shoes;
And the bit in thy mouth, I regret to see,
Is a bit of tobacco-pipe.—Flee, child, flee!

In 'Motherhood,' the tenderest feelings of the reader are wrought up to high pitch :

She laid it where the sunbeams fall
Unscanned upon the broken wall.
Without a tear, without a groan,
She laid it near a mighty stone,
Which some rude swain had haply cast
Thither in sport, long ages past,
And Time with mosses had o'erlaid,
And fenced with many a tall grass blade,
And all about bid roses bloom
And violets shed their soft perfume.
There, in its cool and quiet bed,
She set her burden down and fled :
Nor flung, all eager to escape,
One glance upon the perfect shape
That lay, still warm and fresh and fair,
But motionless and soundless there.

Who would conjecture from so touching a preamble that this poem of 'Motherhood' was simply descriptive of the laying of a hen's egg ! Similarly, 'The Palace,' instead of dealing with enchanted Princesses, is but a sketch of the Crystal Palace on the Foresters' day ; and even in 'First Love,' the maiden, forgotten, 'with her downcast eyes of dreamy blue,' is dismissed with this somewhat commonplace avowal of allegiance :

Never, somehow, could I seem to cotton
To another as I did to you.

'Sad Memories,' again, is a misleading title : yet none who loves a cat—and who that is worthy of the name of human being does not adore that animal—will grudge the tender heading that is placed above poor Puss's tale.

They tell me I am beautiful : they praise my silken hair,
My little feet that silently slip on from stair to stair :
They praise my pretty trustful face and innocent gray eye ;
Fond hands caress me oftentimes, yet would that I might die !

Why was I born to be abhorred of man and bird and beast ?
The bullfinch marks me stealing by, and straight his song hath ceased ;
The shrewmouse eyes me shudderingly, then flees ; and worse than that,
The hound dog he flees after me—why was I born a cat ?

Men prize the heartless hound who quits dry-eyed his native land ;
Who wags a mercenary tail and licks a tyrant hand.
The leal true cat they prize not, that if e'er compelled to roam
Still flies, when let out of the bag, precipitately home.

They call me cruel. Do I know if mouse or song-bird feels ?
I only know they make me light and salutary meals :
And if, as 'tis my nature to, ere I devour I tease 'em,
Why should a low-bred gardener's boy pursue me with a besom ?

Should china fall or chandeliers, or anything but stocks—
Nay stocks, when they're in flower-pots—the cat expects hard knocks :

Should ever anything be missed—milk, coals, umbrellas, brandy—
The cat's pitched into with a boot or anything that's handy.

I remember, I remember, how one night I fled by,
And gained the blessed tiles and gazed into the cold clear sky.

I remember, I remember, how my various lovers came ;
And there, beneath the crescent moon, played many a little game.

They fought—by good St Catharine, 'twas a fear-some sight to see
The coal-black crest, the glowering orbs, of one gigantic He.

Like bow by some tall bowman bent at Hastings or Poitiers,
His huge back curved, till none observed a vestige of his ears :

He stood, an ebon crescent, flouting yon ivory moon ;

Then raised the pibroch of his race, the Song without a Tune :

Gleamed his white teeth, his mammoth tail waved darkly to and fro,
As with one complex yell he burst, all claws, upon the foe.

It thrills me now, that final Miaow—that weird unearthly din :

Lone maidens heard it far away, and leaped out of their skin.

A potboy from his den o'erhead peeped with a scared wan face ;

Then sent a random brickbat down, which knocked me into space.

Nine days I fell, or thereabouts : and, had we not nine lives,

I wis I ne'er had seen again thy sausage-shop, St Ives !

Had I, as some cats have, nine tails, how gladly I would lick

The hand, and person generally, of him who heaved that brick !

For me they fill the milk-bowl up, and cull the choice sardine :

But ah ! I nevermore shall be the cat I once have been !

The memories of that fatal night they haunt me even now :

In dreams I see that rampant He, and tremble at that Miaow.

To poach any more upon so dainty a preserve as *Fly Leaves* would be highly improper ; even as it is, we feel as if we had been stealing gold-fish from a crystal bowl. The little book deserves to be read from cover to cover, and its proper place (we may say for once with fitness) is on every drawing-room table.

On Saturday, 1st June, will be commenced a NOVEL, entitled

A WOMAN'S VENGEANCE.

By the Author of *Cecil's Tryst*, &c.

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